

Approvals for trials on Bt. Rice

1857. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have allowed Mahyco, a Monsanto group company, to conduct trials of Bt. Rice in 10 locations across seven States during this year.

(b) whether it is also a fact that three of these open field trials would take place in the Basmati growing States of Haryana and U.P. and rice exporters fear that if nearby fields are contaminated by Bt. Rice, trials could sound the death knell for India's Rs. 3,000 crore Basmati exports; and

(c) if so, the precautions Government propose to take to guard the basmati exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir, The Government have given approval to M/s. Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co. Ltd., Mumbai, an Indian company to conduct contained field trials of Bt. Rice at 12 locations located in nine States under the provisions of the Rules for Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells notified under the Environmental Protection Act, 1989.

(b) and (c) All the said field trials of GM rice are contained field trials and no open field trials have been permitted. One of the trials is located in Haryana and two are in U.P. The containment measures comprise of adequate physical and biological safeguards namely isolation distance (as per the National Seed Certification Standards) from the nearest rice field, use of tarpaulin sheet cover and planting non-transgenic rice around the experimental crop which acts as a buffer. As for protecting the Basmati exports, the Central Government have taken a policy decision not to allow development of transgenic Basmati rice.

Private investment in plantation

1858. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: